

Rezension: Ulf Engel and Robert Kappel: Germany's Africa Policy Revisited: Interests, Images and Incrementalism

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von Denis Venter und Mpho Molomo. Renske Doorenspleet und besonders Oda van Cranenburgh demonstrieren, wie man im Westen entwickelte politikwissenschaftliche Konzepte gewinnbringend auf das subsaharische Afrika anwenden kann.

Angesichts der dünnen Literaturlage zu politischen Parteien in Afrika kann das Fazit nur lauten: Ein wegweisendes Standardwerk wurde nicht vorgelegt. Dennoch: Wer sich mit politischen Parteien in Afrika beschäftigt, wird an diesem Buch nicht vorbeikommen.

(Matthias Basedau)

Ulf Engel and Robert Kappel: *Germany's Africa Policy Revisited: Interests, Images and Incrementalism*. Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 2002; ISBN 3-8258-5985-1, 214 pp.

Germany's Africa Policy Revisited: Interests, Images and Incrementalism, is a collection of essays written by individuals with some deep insight into the dynamics and intricacies of German Africa policy either as analysts or as practitioners. The book contains 12 chapters, which according to the editors were aimed at reviewing German relations with Africa and to fill in factual gaps that has characterised earlier works on the subject. The book opens with an introduction by the editors, Ulf Engel and Robert Kappel attempting to establish the position of Germany as a major player in Africa. The country is not only a donor of consequence, next to only France and Japan in the volume of its aid flow, it is Africa's second most important trading partner and a major source of foreign direct investment. Yet, they argue, it is difficult, if not impossible to identify German national interest in the continent or to talk of a discernible German

Africa policy in a concrete manner. In the opening chapters, Stefan Mair looked at the German involvement in Africa through the prism of economic, strategic, ecological and global order interests, while Engel, using a surfeit of political science jargons, made a bold attempt to examine the nature of German Africa policy by looking at the structure and institutional machinery of German foreign policy as they relate to the decision making process and quality of policy outputs towards Africa.

Their effort at establishing that there are indeed identifiable and visible interests that Germany has sought to protect, maintain and project in Africa, on a consistent and continual basis was however undermined by the fact that Germany has never clearly defined or articulated an African policy. The closest articulation of a German Africa policy was in November 1989 when Hans-Günter Sulimma, the then Director of the African Affairs Department of the German Foreign Office and one of Hans Dietrich Genscher's protégés posited that German Africa policy is based on the country's ethical and moral convictions and on the interpretation of its national interest. This deliberate obfuscation of German interest deriving from the "low profile" psychological and attitudinal foreign policy approach undermines Mair's case of the existence of "a hierarchical, consistent and coherent system of priorities" in German Africa policy. This could hardly be otherwise due in part to the fact, as observed by Engel, that all policy relating to Africa is mostly formulated and implemented by an exclusive bureaucratic circle. Since their decisions are without reference to a coherent and systematically formulated strategy combined with their and lack of proper understanding of Africa's political and socio-economic milieu, it is not too surprising that German African policy is often times, reactive, negative and contradictory.

Rolf Hofmeier, Peter Molt and Jürgen H. Wolf looked at the political, economic and development aid components of German Africa policy. Hofmeier's broad overview of the tenor and terrain of German Africa policy since 1949 identifies six distinct phases of Afro-German relations. This ranged from the period of German post-War reintegration into the international system to the present era of German apathy towards Africa in spite of its growing international role and stature. A recurring theme running through the six phases is the evident unwillingness of the part of Germany get directly involved in African affairs or to be in the forefront or leadership position, in dealing with issues relating to Africa. Apart from its efforts at diplomatically isolating the East German government through the Hallstein doctrine and at wanting to force the recognition of West Berlin as an integral part of West Germany, Bonn was always careful to play along with the United States in its various anti-communist campaigns in Africa and not to antagonise Britain and France in their design to maintain power and influence in their erstwhile colonies. It is difficult to see how Hofmeier's optimism about a positive German role in Africa as a major player can be realised and how the country can come out of its cocoon into pursuing its national interest in Africa in a more assertive manner.

The chapters by Jürgen H. Wolf and Peter Molt deals essentially with German development aid policy towards Africa at bilateral and multilateral levels. While Molt looked at the role of Germany within the context of the European Union/African, Caribbean and Pacific (EU/ACP) Convention, Wolf examined the scope and impact of German aid in engendering political stability and improving socio-economic conditions in Africa. They both brought into bold relief the crisis of legitimacy surrounding the issue of aid to Sub-Sahara Africa premised on the growing

doubt about the effective utilisation of scarce aid resources. For example, in spite of the more than US\$204.5 billion aid flow to the sub continent in the 1990s, the overall performance of African economies has been negative, with little or no possibility of meeting any of the various global development goals.

The part of the book written by policy actors is supposed to be the most interesting. Reinhart Kössler and Henning Melber's self-critical retrospective view on the involvement of the German solidarity groups in the struggle against white minority rule in Southern Africa and apartheid in South Africa, in which they were both deeply involved, is very informative. Their disappointment that the solidarity movements is not engaged on the side of "wretched of the earth" to combat emergent political marginalisation and increased socio-economic inequalities in the post-colonial and post-apartheid Southern Africa is quite understandable given their antecedents of political activism. Ernest Hillebrand and Volker Vinnai provided an insight into the opaque and behind the scene activities of the German political foundations. They confirmed the unique role of the political foundations as a powerful instrument of West German Africa policy, given their ability to pursue foreign policy goals that are sometimes at variance with declared official German policy.

It is disappointing that Volker Köhler, one of the key and high ranking official players on the German Africa policy landscape in the 1980s and 1990s chose to write on a rather safe and non-controversial positive role and activities of the German Evangelical Church as a non-state actor on the German Africa scene. It would have been more interesting if he had written on the various bureaucratic battles which he fought alongside Jürgen Warnke, the Minister of Development Cooperation with Genscher and his Foreign Office team to determine the content and course of the

German Africa policy in the 1980s. The last two chapters of the book by Friederike Diaby-Pentzlin and Andreas Mehler can be regarded as a German roadmap in dealing with the twin issues of democracy and crisis prevention, which are bound to influence the future course of German Africa policy.

By and large, it is very doubtful if the book was able to fulfil the set out task of providing incontrovertible evidence to fill the various existing gaps in knowledge in Afro-German relations. Nevertheless, it provided a perspective insight into issues that has shaped German policy towards Africa since 1949 and how unified Germany will likely react to issues that are of critical importance to Africa and its people, especially within the context of common European foreign and defence policy.

(Bolade M. Eyinla)